

SAN ANTONIO METROPOLITAN HEALTH DISTRICT



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Influenza H1N1 (Swine Flu) Fact Sheet

What is swine flu?

“Swine flu” is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that cause regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

Are there human infections with swine flu in the U.S.?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with Influenza H1N1 “swine flu” were first reported in Southern California and in Guadalupe County, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of Influenza H1N1 infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. An updated case count of confirmed Influenza H1N1 infections in the United States is maintained at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm>. CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

Is this Influenza H1N1 virus contagious?

CDC has determined that this swine Influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

What are the signs and symptoms of Influenza H1N1 in people?

The symptoms of Influenza H1N1 in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with Influenza H1N1. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infections in people. Like seasonal flu, Influenza H1N1 may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How does Influenza H1N1 spread?

Spread of the Influenza H1N1 virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

How long can an infected person spread Influenza H1N1 to others?

People with Influenza H1N1 virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against Influenza H1N1. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow or sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where Influenza H1N1 cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed. If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

How serious is Influenza H1N1 infection?

Like seasonal flu, Influenza H1N1 infections in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Between 2005 until January 2009, 12 human cases of swine flu were detected in the U.S. with no deaths occurring. However, swine flu infection can be serious. A swine flu outbreak in Fort Dix, New Jersey occurred in 1976 that caused more than 200 cases with serious illness in several people and one death.

Can I get Influenza H1N1 from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get Influenza H1N1 “swine flu” from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

Adapted from information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. April 27, 2009

Influenza H1N1 (Swine Flu) Telephone Hotlines for Information:

Metro Health Hotline: (210) 207-5779

Texas Hotline - General Public: (888) 777-5320

Texas Hotline - Healthcare Providers Only: (877) 623-6274

For more information, please see the following website:

<http://www.sanantonio.gov/HEALTH/SwineFlu.html>